NEWS

WinCAM faces funding crisis as cable subscribers decline, federal threats loom

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

August 6, 2025 . 6:00 AM — 3 min read

WinCAM is facing a $50,000 deficit shortfall, as continued drops in cable subscribers change the organization's bottom line. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/PETER CASEY

Winchester Community Access & Media Inc. (WinCAM) is confr
most serious financial challenge in decades, with a $50,000 budge

Subscribe

threatening the organization's ability to provide local government coverage and community programming.

Executive Director David Gauthier told the Select Board recently that the deficit represents about 15% of WinCAM's entire operating budget, equivalent to one full-time salary. The financial strain stems from a dramatic decline in cable subscribers, who provide more than 90% of WinCAM's funding through franchise fees.

Cable subscribers in Winchester have dropped from nearly 7,500 in 2013 to just over 4,000 at the end of 2024, Gauthier reported. While the revenue losses don't match subscriber losses one-to-one, they're becoming increasingly problematic for the nonprofit organization.

"The federal government's desire to deregulate telecommunications had led to the FCC recent recommendation that franchise fee regulations be eliminated entirely," Gauthier said, describing threats beyond declining viewership.

Subscribe

WinCAM Director David Gauthier was before the Select Board on July 28 to talk about the drop in cable subscribers and how the organization is facing a shortfall. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/PETER CASEY

WinCAM operates with the equivalent of three full-time staff members while producing more than 400 hours of livestreamed content annually, including over 100 government meetings and 65 varsity Winchester High School sporting events.

The organization has attempted to diversify revenue through direct appeals, sponsorships, facility rentals and specialty workshops. Other community media centers have explored selling production services or monetizing online content, but Gauthier noted these efforts haven't closed the funding gap.

"Nothing has come close to closing the gap," he said. "Our business model simply wasn't set up in this way."

Subscribe

State legislation called “An Act to Modernize Funding for Community Media Programming” is in its third legislative session, but progress has been slow. The bill aims to update funding mechanisms as streaming services increasingly use the same infrastructure as traditional cable companies.

“We continue to pursue state legislation,” Gauthier said, noting the measure has received favorable recommendation from a joint committee, but faces hundreds of competing bills in Ways and Means.

Donate today!

Several Massachusetts community media operations have already faced layoffs or closures in recent months, highlighting the industry-wide crisis.

Select Board member Michael Bettencourt acknowledged WinCAM’s value while recognizing the broader funding challenge.

“It’s an important one,” Bettencourt said. “I think the end game is for municipalities to carry this burden, which makes sense. I don’t think that there’s anyone else that’s going to pick up the tab.”

Board member Paras Bhayani suggested WinCAM work with the town’s State of the Town planning process, noting that one board member could facilitate coordination.

“This is, I think, squarely a State of the Town topic for a couple of folks to dive deeply with you,” Bhayani said.

Subscribe

Inside WinCAM's control room. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/PETER CASEY

WinCAM currently operates from rented space on Swanton Street after previously using facilities at Winchester High School. Space costs represent a significant portion of the organization's budget, and board members discussed potential municipal space options as part of long-term sustainability planning.

Gauthier requested that WinCAM be included in the State of the Town planning process for continued partnership and support, emphasizing the organization's role in government transparency and community engagement.

The Select Board took no formal action, but indicated openness to exploring municipal support options as federal and state solutions remain uncertain.

Subscribe

Winchester News is a non-profit organization supported by our community. If you appreciate having local Winchester news, please donate to support our work, and subscribe to our free weekly newsletter.

Related

NEWS

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER
March 4, 2026

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

March 4, 2026

Subscribe

NEWS

Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

March 3, 2026

Latest

NEWS

FEATURES

Subscribe

Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

WILL DOWD | STAFF WRITER

March 4, 2026

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

March 4, 2026

EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

March 4, 2026

NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

March 4, 2026

Subscribe

Subscribe to Winchester News

© 2026 Winchester News Group, Inc. Copying and sharing with permission for non-commercial use only.

Subscribe